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**\* FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE \***

**TO:** Public News Media Sources

**FROM:** Joel Strasz  
Health Officer

**DATE:** September 10, 2014

**RE: Health Officials See Rise in Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Cases**

Health officials in Bay County and across the state of Michigan are seeing an increase in cases of pertussis (also known as whooping cough), including severe illness in young children with pertussis, and emphasize it is important for both children and adults to be up to date on their immunizations.

Since the beginning of 2014, 14 cases of pertussis have been identified in Bay County, as compared to the 2 cases reported last year during the same time, according to Bay County Health Officer, Joel Strasz. No deaths have been reported in Bay County.

Pertussis is a contagious respiratory tract infection, spread through coughs and sneezes. Symptoms typically start with a cough and runny nose for one to two weeks, followed by weeks to months of rapid coughing fits that sometimes end with a whooping sound. Pertussis is especially dangerous for unimmunized and incompletely immunized infants.

Babies and very young children (age six and under) can be protected against pertussis by completing the DTap vaccine series of five shots, typically given at two, four, six and 15-18 months of age, with a booster dose at kindergarten entry. Adults and children over the age of 11 who previously completed their vaccination series can receive protection against pertussis with one dose of a booster vaccine called Tdap. Both the DTap and Tdap vaccines can be found at most healthcare provider offices.

To prevent the spread of pertussis, it is recommended that:

- Pregnant women receive the pertussis vaccine booster during the third trimester of each pregnancy, even if they received it before. Immunity passes to the baby, providing some protection after birth and before the child can be vaccinated.

- Infants get vaccinated against pertussis as soon as possible. The first dose is routinely recommended at two months of age, but since pertussis is circulating in the community, infants can be vaccinated as young as six weeks of age.
- Adults receive the pertussis vaccine booster, especially if they have contact with infants or are healthcare workers in contact with infants or pregnant women.

The Bay County Health Department is collaborating closely with local healthcare providers, and advises individuals to consult with their healthcare provider to schedule a vaccination. The Bay County Health Department offers low-cost vaccinations for people who are uninsured or whose insurance does not cover vaccines, as well as for children and adults with Medicaid.

To reach the Immunization Division of the Bay County Health Department please call (989) 895-4009, Ext. 2 for more information or to schedule an appointment.